

**Standard USHC-2:** The student will demonstrate an understanding of the establishment of the United States as a new nation.

**Indicator:**

**USHC- 2.1** Summarize the early development of representative government and political rights in the American colonies, including the influence of the British political system, the rule of law and the conflict between the colonial legislatures and the royal governors. (P, H)

**Taxonomy Level:** 2 B - Understand Conceptual Knowledge

**Previous/future knowledge:**

In 3rd grade, students summarized the contributions of settlers in South Carolina under the Lords Proprietors and the Royal colonial government and other groups who made up the diverse European population of early South Carolina (3-2.6).

In the 8th grade, students summarized the significant changes to South Carolina's government during the colonial period (8-1.5).

In Global Studies, students explained the long-term effects of political changes that occurred in Europe during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries in government (GS - 3.2). They also explained the ways that Enlightenment ideas spread through Europe and their effect on European society and the political and cultural influence of thinkers such as John Locke, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Baron de Montesquieu (GS – 3.4).

**It is essential for students to know**

American representative government developed during the colonial period as a result of both the transport of ideas of representative government from England and the circumstances of New World. The English settlers brought with them concepts from British government of the Magna Carta and later the English Bill of Right. The Magna Carta (USHC 2.5) recognized the rights of Englishmen to be consulted on the levying of taxes and to have their rights protected by a jury of their peers. This is the basis of the English parliamentary and judicial systems. Colonial charters granted by the king included statements declaring that English colonists continued to enjoy the rights of Englishmen (USHC 2.5). English political tradition also included the **rule of law**, the principle that every member of society must obey the law, even the king. In this legal system rules are clear, well-understood, and fairly enforced. The settlers applied the principles of the right of the legislature to levy taxes and the rule of law to their colonial governments.

The House of Burgesses, the Mayflower Compact, and the New England town meetings are examples of early **representative government**. The Virginia Company allowed the colonists in Jamestown to start the House of Burgesses as a way of attracting colonists and maintaining order in the colony. However only property owners were allowed to vote and the development of a social elite to whom others deferred meant that the colonists did not have a truly democratic government. By the 1620s, the king had appointed a royal governor. The Mayflower Compact is an early example of the principle that the people form the government. Puritan religious ideology supported representative government in Massachusetts Bay and these ideas were spread to other parts of New England as Puritans migrated. The Puritan church was governed by the male members of the congregation who also governed their civil society through town meetings. Each town sent representatives to the General Court in Boston. At first, only members of the Puritan church were allowed to vote. All thirteen colonies established a representative assembly which had the right to collect taxes. By the time of the American Revolution, most colonies had a royal governor.

Circumstances in England during the 1600s also affected the development of representative government in the colonies. After almost a century of struggle between the king and Parliament, King James was overthrown in the Glorious Revolution and replaced with William and Mary who agreed to abide by the English Bill of Right (USHC 2.5). The monarchs were forced to recognize the supremacy of

Parliament and its right to make tax law. John Locke wrote *The Social Contract* arguing that man had natural rights to life, liberty and property and that the authority to govern rests on the will of the people.

Colonial legislatures were soon in **conflict with the royal governors**. Although the royal governors sometimes used their autocratic power to cancel the colonial legislatures or change their location, the power of the royal governor was limited by the ‘power of the purse’. Since the assemblies had the right to levy taxes they controlled the governor’s salary as well as the government of the colony. The control that Parliament was able to exert on the colonies was limited by distance and desire. After the 1720s, the English government followed a policy of salutary neglect, leaving the colonists to govern themselves. It was the change of this policy that riled the colonists into revolt.

The cost of the French and Indian War caused Great Britain to change her policy towards the colonies to achieve greater control of her empire and impose taxes to help pay the war debt. Parliament attempted to enforce the Navigation Acts and collect taxes directly from the colonists rather than recognizing the exclusive right of the colonial assemblies to collect taxes. Conflicts over the Stamp Act resulted in the creation of the Sons and Daughters of Liberty, the Stamp Act Congress and an effective economic boycott which resulted in the repeal of the Stamp Act. The stationing of British troops in the colonies resulted in the Boston Massacre and further alienated the colonists. The Townshend Acts resulted in a continuation of the boycott and the Tea Act resulted in the Boston Tea Party, which led to the “Intolerable” (Coercive) Acts, the First Continental Congress, and the conflict at Lexington and Concord that began the Revolutionary War. Students should know the sequence of these events and that they were protests about the loss of the ‘rights of Englishmen’ and against ‘taxation without representation’.

There are several common misconceptions that should be avoided or corrected. The colonists were not protesting against the taxes because the taxes were too high nor were they attempting to form a new kind of government. Instead the colonists were trying to hold onto the government that they had developed during the time of salutary neglect. Neither did the colonists want to have representation in Parliament; since they would have been outvoted. What they wanted was British recognition that only their colonial legislatures had the right to impose taxes on the citizens of the colonies.

#### **It is not essential for students to know:**

It is not necessary to go into detail about the circumstances surrounding the signing of the Magna Carta, the English Civil War and the Puritan Commonwealth or the Glorious Revolution. Students do not need to remember the specific Navigation Acts, nor that this legislation actually aided the development of colonial shipping and provided subsidies for colonial growers of products such as indigo.

Students do not need to know about the different types of colonies (charter, proprietary or royal). However, students *should* know that most colonies were royal colonies by the time of the American Revolution.

Students do not need to know about the various battles of the French and Indian War or specific conflicts with the Native Americans. They do not need to remember specific details about the conflicts between the colonists and Parliament over taxes. For instance, they do not need to remember that the Sugar Act attempted to enforce the Navigation Acts’ import tax on sugar and established admiralty courts which violated rights to a trial by a jury of one’s peers (Magna Carta) and that the American reaction was to both protest the admiralty courts and increase smuggling. They do not need to remember that the colonists were opposed to the Stamp Act because it was a direct tax which violated the exclusive right of the colonial assemblies to levy taxes rather than an indirect or import tax such as the sugar tax. The Townshend Acts were an indirect tax on a list of goods, including tea, but were repealed as a result of the boycott except for the tax on tea. The Tea Act was not a tax, but permission for the East India Tea Company to have a monopoly on the sale of tea in the colonies which would allow them to sell tea at a lower price. This lowered price threatened the effectiveness of colonial boycott and resulted in the Boston Tea Party.

#### **Assessment guidelines:**

Appropriate assessments will require students to **explain** the development of early representative government in the British colonies. The students need to be able to **summarize** the concepts of rule of law and the political rights of the colonists that were brought with them from England. They should be able to **compare** British colonial policy before and after the French and Indian War. They should be able to **classify** the British actions as taxes or other violations of rights. They should be able to **infer** that it was the accumulation of “repeated injuries and usurpations” which brought the colonists to the point of rebellion.